



## Nansemond River Ghost Fleet Secrets Revealed

In early 2017, Kermit Hobbs and John Cross were searching the banks of the Nansemond River for a dugout canoe that had been seen in the area behind Walgreen's Drugs on Constance Road. They found the canoe, and it was later removed and taken to Riddick's Folly, where it is now kept.

It happened that on the day and time they were searching, the tide was unusually low. The two noticed rows of what appeared to be wooden posts projecting up from the mud flat beyond the river bank. Their curiosity was aroused, and Kermit flew his drone out over the site for a better look. John and Kermit were amazed at what they saw. Below them were the outlines of as many as five boats of various sizes resting in the mud.

Where could they have come from? How long had they been there? Could these be remnants of John Cowper's colonial-era shipyard? No one they asked could answer those questions. Nor could they find any written documents that shed light on this puzzle. (cont'd. page 3)



## Phillips-Dawson House Venue Rentals

The Phillips-Dawson House is available to rent for clubs, receptions, parties, meetings, speakers and even weddings. The facility can accommodate up to seventy-five standing and forty seated. Banquet ware and glassware are available for up to forty. We have a full kitchen and coffee bar area for your convenience. The back yard area can also be used for an outdoor activity.

Please contact SNHS for more information and fee schedule.

We look forward to hosting your next special event, as you make your own history.

*Phone: (757) 539-2781*

## Calendar of Events

### *Afternoon Conversations*

#### **SPEAKER SERIES**

**LOCATION: 137 BANK ST.**

**June 12 @ 2:00-3:00 PM**

*Kelly Hengler*

**Crittenden-Eclipse Village Preservation**

**July 10 @ 2:00-3:00 PM**

*Wanda Gerard*

**Suffolk Master Gardeners Assoc.**

**Sponsored by Suffolk Public Library &  
Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society**

## SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

In the early 1830s, Rufus Bliss opened Bliss Manufacturing Company in Rhode Island. Bliss became famous at the turn of the 20th century for making children's toys, including lawn tennis and croquet sets. The Boys Union Tool Chest was advertised in the 1911 Bliss catalog as an exact imitation of an adult's tool chest. This was made of a weathered oak or chestnut finish.

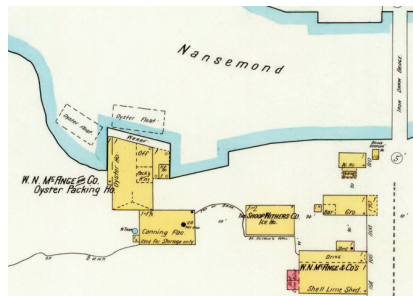




## Nansemond River Ghost Fleet Secrets Revealed (cont'd. from front cover)

Kermit posted his drone videos on YouTube under the title “Nansemond River Ghost Fleet” in hopes that someone, someday, would be able to explain the existence of the boats. The video can be reached by searching “Nansemond River Ghost Fleet” on YouTube or by going to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YR5X5YorvQM>.

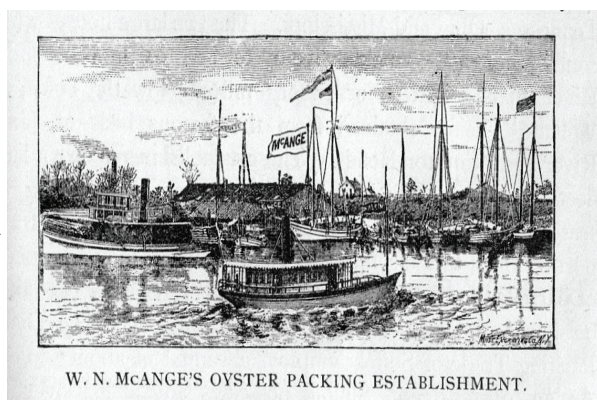
In 2018, the video caught the attention of Bob and Mary Hayes, Coordinators of the Mid-Atlantic Logboat/Dugout Canoe Registry, Maritime Heritage Chapter, Archaeological Society of Virginia, who were visiting Riddick’s Folly regarding the recovery of the dugout canoe from the same site. They viewed the videos with barely constrained excitement and vowed to help find information on the subject.



In May 2019, Mr. & Mrs. Hayes returned to Suffolk, bringing with them Dr. John Broadwater, Acting State Underwater Archaeologist for the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. Like the Hayeses, Dr. Broadwater was elated at the discovery of the boats. Furthermore, he, along with Mr. & Mrs. Hayes, brought a treasure trove of historical information about the Suffolk riverfront of the late 1880’s.

An 1898 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Suffolk (shared by Brendan Burke and Austin Burkhard, archaeologists with the St. Augustine Lighthouse and Maritime Museum) clearly shows a building, the William N. McAnge and Co. Oyster Packing House, projecting from the south bank of the Nansemond, in close proximity to where the boat outlines have been found. Further investigation uncovered an ad and an illustration of McAnge’s business in Pollock’s 1886 *Sketch Book of Suffolk, Virginia*.

There may be five or more boats of varying type and length in the Nansemond mud. One boat appears to be a plank-and-frame “double-ender”, about 50 feet long. The largest vessel is estimated to be 80 or more feet in length. According to Dr. Broadwater, at least one of boats observed in the Nansemond mud may have been a “scow schooner”, a boat of light draft that had large carrying capacity but could operate in very shallow waters. He described such boats as being essentially floating boxes with pointed bows. One of the outlines fits that description perfectly.



McAnge’s advertising literature states that he owned both the oyster beds near the mouth of the Nansemond River and a fleet of boats for harvesting and shipping the oysters. Are the boats in the mud associated with McAnge’s business? This question cannot yet be ascertained with certainty. However, the boat locations, physical outline of the boat types, piling remnants, and historical information offer intriguing clues worthy of further investigation.

Dr. Broadwater hopes to organize a formal archaeological study of the boats in the near future, as historical research of that riverfront area continues. Currently, no connection has been found between the dugout canoe and the oyster boats, but that possibility has not been ruled out.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** Written and photographed by Kermit Hobbs, Historian

# ARCHIVES

by Debra Smith

Over the years, locals have probably heard something relating to the Hamblin Studio Photographic Collection. The Hamblin Collection has allowed an in-depth look into Suffolk history dating back to 1890, when Mr. White started his own photography business in Suffolk.

Fred Hamblin bought the studio in 1918 and took thousands of photographs over the next 39 years. Although Mr. Hamblin sold the business in 1957 to Billy Moore, the studio continued to be referred to as the Hamblin Studio. Mr. Moore owned the studio for 26 years.

When Joseph Wiseman bought the studio in 1983 the sale included the photographic negatives from the previous owners. He sold five of these images to Hampton University in 1984 for their exhibit, "Don't Grieve After Me: The Black Experience in Virginia 1619-1986."

In early 1985 Mr. Kermit Hobbs was working on his book *Suffolk: A Pictorial History*, and Joe Wiseman gave him unrestricted access to the negatives. Once he was through selecting and printing the photographs for the book, Mr. Hobbs returned the negatives to the studio and SNHS has copies of the prints.

In 1988 Mr. Wiseman sold the business to O'Neal's but he kept the negatives. He executed a deed of gift to the City of Suffolk in 1991, which granted the City all rights and copyright to the collection.

The Library of Virginia created a grant project to provide consulting, funding, and implementation services for Virginia libraries in 1998. The Virginia Digital Library Program (VDLP) was able to digitize 1,365 pictures from the Hamblin Collection which can be viewed on the Library of Virginia's website.

SNHS was given a part of the collection that was thought lost through time. These negatives and bridal portraits were found at the O'Neal Studio and were thoughtfully donated to us in 2015.



## *Hamblin Studios* PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION



*Debra volunteers at SNHS and researched the Hamblin Collection for her MS LIS at St. John's University. Photographs courtesy of Library of Virginia; Suffolk Public Library; Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society.*



NEW EXHIBIT

*Opening May 2019*

# *"I Thee Wed"*

This exhibit features photos,  
designs and memorabilia  
from weddings through the years.

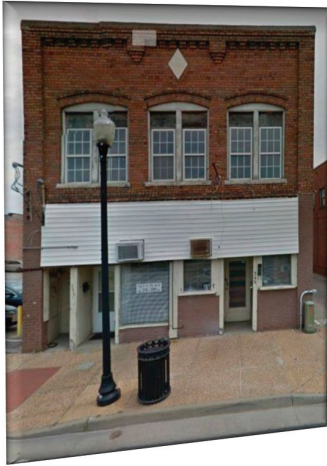
*Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society  
Phillips - Dawson House*

137 Bank Street  
Suffolk, VA



# RESEARCH

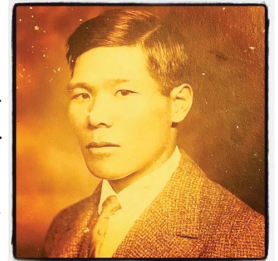
by Chris Claud



The Horseshoe Cafe

The Monday afternoon edition of the Suffolk News-Herald on December 8, 1941 led with this headline, "CONGRESS DECLARES WAR AGAINST JAPAN, Japan Claims Big Air, Naval Victories Over U.S." The previous day, President Franklin D. Roosevelt addressed a Joint Session of Congress where he described this day of the Pearl Harbor attack as "a date which will live in infamy." Little did the American citizens of Suffolk, Virginia know just how dramatically this speech and the declaration of war that followed would change their lives, as well as those of the only two Japanese citizens living and working there.

Within a few hours of the attack, Suffolk Police Chief, Lawrence B. Butler took Tsuruju Miyazaki, owner and operator of *The Horseshoe Cafe* and his co-worker Shigeo Nakasato into custody. They were later transported to Norfolk and sent with another Japanese citizen of that city to the Rohwer Relocation Center in Arkansas, according to the "United States Japanese Americans Relocated During World War II" database.



Tsuruju Miyaaki

There are differing stories about what became of *The Horseshoe Cafe* after that fateful day, but based on listings in a "1938 Suffolk and Vicinity Telephone Directory," both Mr. Miyazaki's residence and his restaurant were located at 360 East Washington Street with a telephone number of 963. Also, in the business section, a brief description of the restaurant's cuisine reads, "Choice Oriental and American Dishes Including Chop Suey and Yock-A-Mein."

In October 2018, SNHS was contacted by Regina Boone, daughter of Suffolk's own Raymond Boone and granddaughter of Tsuruju Miyazaki, seeking information on and photographs of *The Horseshoe Cafe*. Multiple searches were conducted in the SNHS archives and collections, as well as the Morgan Memorial Library's historic resources with limited results. However, many photos were found of surrounding businesses and people from the 1930's when the café was at the height of its popularity. Some of these were filmed by a crew from NHK World News in Tokyo, Japan for use in a 2019 documentary covering Ms. Boone's journey to discover more about her grandfather, his family and business in Suffolk. She would later learn that Mr. Miyaaki died of tuberculosis at age 49 in Chicago, Illinois.

Today, the original restaurant's once brightly lit sign with its distinctive star, horseshoe and arrow motif still hangs from the building at 374 East Washington Street as a stark reminder of a young Japanese man's dream taken from him without warning and lost forevermore.



Photographs courtesy of Google Search

Chris volunteers at SNHS conducting genealogy and historical research. He worked with Regina and NHK World News to support the production of the documentary, *A Vanished Dream*, which is now available at SNHS.



## ANNUAL SALE SEPTEMBER 14TH

Every year we host an annual sale at the Phillips-Dawson House. Items in the sale are donated by members throughout the year.

If you have any glassware, dishes, furniture, trinkets or pictures that you would like to donate, please contact us. All proceeds go directly to support SNHS and are tax deductible.



In partnership with Suffolk Tourism, *Historic Downtown Narrated Bus Tour* now offers stops at the Phillips-Dawson House for guided tours.

Last year, we conducted over 300 tours of the facility, with visitors throughout the United States, Canada and France.

You can sign up to take the tour yourself or tell a friend/family member that this informative, Downtown, historic tour is available.

Please check Tourism's website for event dates and availability throughout the year.

## Coming *NEXT* Newsletter!

- ⇒ *History Lesson* from our own **KERMIT HOBBS**.
- ⇒ *Special Collections* from our archives.
- ⇒ **MORE** great *Afternoon Conversations* speakers!

2019 PROJECT FUNDRAISE  
ANNUAL SALE  
TOUCH-A-TRUCK

## VOLUNTEERS

We are always looking for people who are interested in helping out at the Phillips-Dawson House. Join our team of volunteers as we work and learn together about our community, heritage and genealogy. We always have a great time in the process. Call today if you would enjoy being a part of the Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society.

Please call: 757-514-4130

<https://www.visitsuffolkva.com>

## Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society 501(c)(3) Non-Profit

PRESENTED BY THE SUFFOLK-NANSEMOND HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CITY OF SUFFOLK

**Touch a  
TRUCK  
TRAIN  
&  
TRICK  
or  
TREAT**

**SATURDAY  
OCTOBER 26  
11AM-2PM**

*Suffolk Seaboard Station  
Railroad Museum*  
**757.539.2781**

Facebook

**JOIN US FOR HALLOWEEN FUN!**  
Wear costumes and we will provide treat bags!  
Suffolk Seaboard Station Railroad Museum • 326 N. Main Street

**Tickets: \$5 per person or 4 for \$15**  
Valid only on the day of the event

*Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society*

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Monday	9:00am-3:00pm
Tuesday	9:00am-3:00pm
Wednesday	CLOSED
Thursday	9:00am-3:00pm
Friday	9:00am-12 pm
Saturday	CLOSED
Sunday	CLOSED

Check out our webpage:

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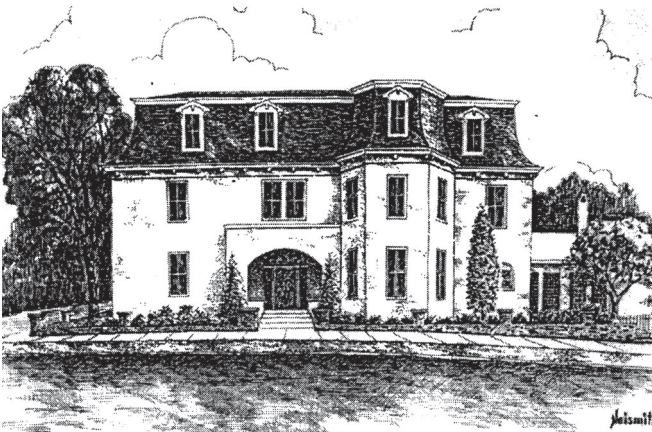
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Suffolk, Virginia 23439-1255

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# Please join us!

## July 15-18

### TIDEWATER

## Summer Camp

*This year, the Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society & Suffolk Art League will once again be hosting a summer camp. The age range for camp is entering 6th through 9th grade. Space is limited and sign-up is required. This camp is funded by the Birdsong Trust Fund and is available to excellent students for a small fee. This year's camp will include trips to Chippokes State Park and Chesapeake Bay Foundation, plus various other activities. This is an excellent opportunity for Suffolk students. Once we receive your deposit and application we will send additional information.*

*Please call (757) 539-2781*



HISTORY

ART

EXPLORATION

CANOEING

TOURS

EDUCATION

Monday-Thursday  
9:00 am - 3:00 pm

LOCATION:  
137 BANK ST. &  
118 BOSLEY  
SUFFOLK, VA 23434

[suffolkhistory.org](http://suffolkhistory.org)